

## In brief: Research Quality Plus

Research Quality Plus (RQ+) is an approach for advancing the quality of research. RQ+ encompasses three components:

1. **Accept a multi-dimensional view of quality in research.** Scientific rigor is fundamental but concepts of quality should include other values and objectives that matter to your organization. For IDRC, these included integrity, legitimacy, importance, and positioning for use. For other funders, think tanks, journals and universities, these dimensions may be very different. This is a good thing.
2. **Account for the context in which research happens.** The predominant forms of research quality assessment can isolate research from its environment. But there is much to learn by considering research within varying political, organizational, disciplinary and data settings. Doing so reinforces good systems thinking.
2. **As with the research we conduct, our judgement of quality must be underpinned by empirical evidence** and not just opinion. Using systematic rubrics, RQ+ asks evaluators to draw evidence-based conclusions. With this in mind they ask intended users of research for their insights, and balance these against the voice of beneficiary communities, other researchers in the same field, and bibliometrics.



## Potential uses of RQ+

RQ+ was initially designed for use in a set of external IDRC program reviews undertaken in 2015. Since then, RQ+ has been used, and sometimes adapted, in a number of ways. The RQ+ approach can support planning, management and learning processes of a research project, program or grants portfolio.

Uses	Users	Why and how?
<i>Inception</i> <b>Building a shared vision</b>	Governments, funding partners, and program staff	<p><i>Why?</i> RQ+ cultivates a shared understanding of, and common approach to, research quality by making quality goals explicit and transparent.</p> <p><i>How?</i> RQ+ enables actors to articulate the values and principles underlying their research and its management.</p>
<i>Design</i> <b>Toward strong projects and a cohesive portfolio</b>	Program staff and grantees	<p><i>Why?</i> RQ+ helps establish the desired results of a program or portfolio of grants and strengthens planning for quality.</p> <p><i>How?</i> A focus on identified contextual factors and quality dimensions of interest can flag aspects that should be addressed in proposals by grantees and in application reviews by funders.</p>
<i>Implementation</i> <b>Program monitoring, learning, and improvement</b>	Program staff and grantees	<p><i>Why?</i> RQ+ supports the adaptive management of research portfolios. It can support real-time learning as a program progresses through project by project monitoring, self-reflection by grantees or funders, and/or formative or developmental evaluations.</p> <p><i>How?</i> RQ+ enables more meaningful target setting and the development of appropriate milestones. RQ+ can be used for tracking progress over time and informing program decision-making.</p>
<i>Evaluation</i> <b>Learning and accountability</b>	Evaluators and evaluation users (such as managers, board of governors, policy-makers, etc.)	<p><i>Why?</i> RQ+ provides an assessment framework to judge research quality based on pre-defined criteria. It facilitates meta-evaluation across and comparison between different types of interventions.</p> <p><i>How?</i> The systematic nature of the RQ+ approach enables roll-up of quality assessments across programs, portfolios, disciplines, organizations, funding modalities, etc.</p>

For more information on Research Quality Plus, please visit: [www.idrc.ca/RQPlus](http://www.idrc.ca/RQPlus)